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Committees and Party Cohesion in the European Parliament

Wie sichern politische Parteien in sich neu herausbildenden gesetzgebenden Körperschaften Parteidisziplin und -kohäsion? In etablierten parlamentarischen Demokratien besitzen Parteien häufig ein so hohes Niveau an Einheitlichkeit, dass der Frage, wie und warum eine solche Parteidisziplin entsteht, bis zuletzt wenig Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt wurde. In sich neu herausbildenden gesetzgebenden Körperschaften ist die Transformation von rudimentären Parteiorganisationen in disziplinierte Parteien jedoch keine zwangsläufige. Dieser Artikel untersucht, ob die politischen Gruppen im Europäischen Parlament (EP) Versuche unternehmen, Parteidisziplin durchzusetzen. Spezifischer untersucht der Beitrag, ob MEPs, die laufend gegen die eigene Partei stimmen, von dieser im Rahmen des Prozesses der Ausschussentsendung im EP bestraft werden.

Keywords: political parties, European Parliament, party discipline
politische Parteien, Europäisches Parlament, Parteidisziplin

> Perhaps [the] biggest obstacle – one of the Parliament's biggest failings – is indiscipline among the Political Groups […]. Although the groups have coalesced a bit over the years, so that there are now only four that really count, they will never be able to exert real control over members until they correspond to and fight elections as genuine European-wide parties. Such a change could take decades.
>
> The Economist, January 11th 1997.

> There are signs, albeit somewhat patchy ones, that pan-European political groups are emerging as genuine political actors.
>
> The Economist, January, 18th 2007.

1. Introduction

How do political parties enforce party discipline and promote cohesiveness in newly emerging legislatures? Political parties in established parliamentary democracies typically exhibit such high levels of unity that the question of how and why such discipline arises has, until recently, received little attention (Bowler et al. 1999). But in emerging legislatures the process of transforming rudimentary party organisations into disciplined parties is not inevitable. This article examines if the political groups in the European Parliament (EP) attempt to enforce party discipline? Specifically, the paper asks the question are MEPs who consistently vote against the party punished in terms of the committee assignments they obtain? The conventional wisdom, as indicated in the opening quote, is that the political groups in the EP are weak an ineffectual, little more than collections of national parties.

The literature on political parties and party discipline suggests that cohesive voting blocs are central to the functioning of any legislature. With reference to the EP, however, "the usual

range of incentives and inducements open to parties to help shape action en bloc seem to be lacking" (Bowler et al. 1999, 209). First, the institutional imperatives that typically operate in parliamentary democracies are missing. Normally, the need to keep a governing party in power acts as a powerful incentive for maintaining a majority-voting bloc. But within the EP no executive rests on the support of a majority party. Second, the political groups cannot sanction rebel members through the electoral nomination process. Where a party controls the nomination process, it can encourage cohesion through the selection and de-selection of "problem" candidates (Gallagher/Marsh 1988). However, the political groups in the EP have no direct control over access to the ballot in the twenty-seven member states. Finally, the supply of political goods, to which the political groups have access, is highly constrained. Most notably, the political groups do not have funds at their disposal to finance members' election campaigns: election campaigns are funded according to domestic election laws in the member states. As a result, not surprisingly, the political groups in the European Parliament fare poorly, in terms of cohesion and discipline, when compared with their counterparts in the national legislatures of Europe. Nonetheless, levels of cohesion have been rising over time (Hix et al. 2007). Given the highly constrained environment in which the political groups operate how has this been achieved?

Cox and McCubbins (1993) have made a forceful argument in the case of the US House of Representatives that parties can encourage party discipline through the institutions of the legislature itself. Through the use of patronage, in particular the committee system, parties can create incentives for members to vote in unison. This process operates on two levels. First, party renegades can be punished through the patronage system by being denied "plum positions". Second, parties that act in unison have an advantage over divided parties as they can gain control of the institution itself and the rules that define it. This paper examines whether or not the political groups in the European Parliament have taken advantage of the internal organization of the EP, in particular the committee system, to encourage tighter party discipline. Specifically, the paper asks the question is there a relationship between an MEP's loyalty to his party and the value of his committee assignment?

This article has three principle objectives. First, it aims to extend our understanding of the internal organisation of the EP itself. Despite evidence (Corbett et al. 2007; Judge/Earnshasw 2003; McElroy 2007) that committees play an important role in the legislative process in the European Parliament, our understanding of the importance of the committee system remains underdeveloped. Second, the paper will demonstrate that, contrary to conventional wisdom, the main political groups in the European Parliament made a conscious effort to control their members quite early in the Parliament's history. Third, the paper aims to contribute to the literature on party development and party organisation more generally.

This paper proceeds as follows: First, a brief overview of the EP committee system and assignment process is provided along with further elaboration of the theoretical model. Second, a rank orderings of committees in the EP is derived. Third, the data and key variables are outlined and the empirical results are presented and discussed. Fourth, the robustness of the results is tested. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of possible extensions of the current work and the significance of the findings.

2. The EP Committee System and the Assignments process

Committees have played a central role in the EP from the outset. The Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the antecedent of the modern Parliament, recognised that committees would help alleviate the problems inherent in co-ordinating work in an Assembly which was scheduled to meet in plenary only a handful of times a year. To this end, it created seven committees to conduct Assembly business in January of 1953. The establishment of the European Parliament after the entry into force of the Treaty of Rome (1957) brought substantial change to the number, names and prestige of committees, in an effort to reflect the wider areas of responsibility of the European Economic Community. Further expansion of the committee system occurred in the aftermath of the first direct elections. At the same time as the membership of the Parliament expanded from 200 to 410 members, the number of standing committees was increased from twelve to fifteen. In 1981 two further committees were added and one more was added in 1987, 1992 and 1994. By the end of the fourth parliamentary period (June 1999) there were a total of twenty standing committees in place and despite some attempts to reduce this number during the course of the 5th Parliament, there remain twenty full committees today (2008), with several well established sub-committees also. MEPs can serve in a full capacity on more than one committee but one full committee assignment and one substitute position is the norm. Seats on committees are assigned proportionately to party strength and a majority of committees lie within one seat of perfect proportionality (McElroy 2006).

Our understanding of the committee assignment process is undoubtedly most fully developed in the case of the US Congress. But even here, there is little consensus on the role of political parties in the process. The self-selection model advocated by Shepsle and Weingast (1987) and Weingast and Marshall (1988) views the committee system as an institution that has evolved to serve the re-election needs of party members. Members choose committee seats on the basis of their constituent interests and party leaders largely comply with member requests. Rural members will opt for the agricultural committee while urban members will opt for the transport committee etc. Norms such as that of seniority have evolved to limit leadership discretion and reduce intra-party competition for key committee positions.

An alternative view of the assignment process is put forward by Cox and McCubbins (1993) who posit that political parties, in particular majority parties, are legislative cartels that organise the legislature in such a fashion as to control policy outcomes. With regard to committee assignments, this theory argues that the party leadership is central to the process and party loyalty is a critical determinant of transfers to exclusive and semi-exclusive committees. Damgaard (1995) has found some evidence that the assignment and reappointment process is also used by political parties in the parliamentary democracies of Europe as a source of reward and punishment. He found, for instance, that refusal of reappointment to committees occurs in the UK, Switzerland and Italy, though the extent to which this takes place is not quantified.

In the case of the European Parliament committee membership is officially established twice during the course of the five-year legislative period, in the immediate part-session following elections and again half way through the five-year term. Unlike the case of the US Congress there is a large movement of MEPs between committees at both of these time points. Table 1 provides an overview of the extent of committee transfers in the period 1989–1999. During this period, upwards of a third of MEPs changed committees from one half session to the next. In this article I explore if there is something systematic about these high turnover rates? Why do MEP move

with such regularity from one committee to another? How do political groups decide between two members vying for one committee seat?

Table 1: Percentage of MEP's transferring between committees 1989–1999

Political Group	1989	1992	1994	1997	1999
Party of the European Socialists	41 (101)	38 (184)	43 (105)	23 (214)	38 (100)
European People's Party	33 (70)	34 (125)	44 (72)	27 (180)	41 (102)
European Liberal Democrats	57 (21)	55 (47)	57 (14)	40 (40)	40 (15)
Greens	50 (6)	56 (30)	57 (7)	21 (28)	33 (12)
GUE/NGL	33 (9)	53 (28)	71 (14)	48 (33)	81 (16)
Column Total	207	414	212	495	245

Figures in parenthesis represent the total number of cases.
Data compiled by the author from the annual List of Members of the European Parliament.

Key to the theoretical argument to be tested in this paper is the fact that the party leadership of the political groups controls the assignment process in the EP. I will use this fact to test the hypothesis that the parties use the assignment process to punish those who rebel against the party. It is apparent that the political groups recognised the potential of the committee system as a source of patronage (and by extension control) as early as the first directly elected legislature. In 1981, for instance, the position of substitute was formalised and control of the position was transferred from the individual MEP to the Political Group. Prior to this "any member of a committee [could] arrange for his place to be taken at meetings by another Member of Parliament of his choice" (Chapter X Rule of Procedure 40:3 1978). In addition, by the beginning of the second Parliament (1984) all requests for seats on a committee had to be channelled through an MEPs political group; prior to this they could be submitted directly to the Parliamentary Bureau. These changes would lend some credibility to the notion that the Political Groups recognised the committee system as a potential supply of incentives and patronage for otherwise highly constrained parties. In sum I hypothesise that:

> *H1: The Party leadership of the Political Groups in the European Parliament use selective incentives in the form of attractive committee assignments to reward party loyalists and punish those who rebel.*

3. Committee Hierarchies

The argument outlined in the previous section rests on the assumption that not all committee seats are of equal value. If the committee system is to be used as a source of reward, then by definition, some committee seats must be more highly prized than others. Precise predictions about what assignment a particular MEP will prefer will in part be dictated by personal policy preferences but it is maintained here that whatever the motivational mix of a given MEP, he will strictly prefer to be on a committee that is policy influential as opposed to one which is not.

In the European Parliament some committees are key in the legislative process whilst others are merely consultative and have no direct impact on policy output. Anecdotal evidence

suggests that MEPs are fully aware of the differences between the legislative powers of the committees and that there is serious competition for membership of committees with law-making powers. As one former European People's Party (EPP) member of Parliament put it succinctly: "The crux of the committee system is the question of which committee has power."[1] A British Labour MEP further suggested that while his true preferences lay in one committee's jurisdiction he "chose Legal Affairs because it has real powers under co-decision unlike EMAC [European and Monetary Affairs Committee]".[2] Elite interviews further suggest that the assignment process itself is subject to much infighting within parties. One British member of the European Liberal Democrats commented:

> *The assignment of members to committees reflects one's standing in the Parliament, you could actually use this as an indicator of one's standing in parliament, and the request for particular committee positions is always highly contentious.*[3]

Unfortunately, no definitive rank ordering of committees in the EP exists. And while it is relatively easy to differentiate between the very powerful and very weak committee, systematically ranking the other committees is problematic. The importance of committees may change over time and given the level of institutional transformation in the European Parliament in recent decades one should expect the metrics of committee importance to change from one Parliament to the next. Ideally, to come up with a rank ordering of committees one would have member specific valuation of committee seats but in the absence of such information standard methods to rank committee examine transfer patterns.

In this paper I use the Groseclose and Stewart (1998) measure of committee rank to arrive at a rank ordering of committees. This method has several advantages over earlier methods proposed by Bullock and Sprague (1969) and Munger (1988). First and foremost, it overcomes the problems that arise when transfers between committees do not involve one for one movement. For instance it can take account of situations in which a member gives up two committee seats for one committee assignment. Second, the traditional methods view transfers between committees in isolation. That is, they only consider the relationship between the transferred from committee and the committee to which a member transfers. These ranking systems do not take into account the quality of the "opposition". Groseclose and Stewart argue that committee ranks are similar to rankings in competitive sports. Simply looking at the number of wins and losses can be very misleading. Winning against a strong team should count for more than winning against a weak opponent.

The Groseclose and Stewart method considers transfers as a competition between one committee and one or more competing committees. For each set of adjacent committee periods a matrix of (N) members by (M) committees is created.[4] The committee transferred to 'wins' the contest, achieving a score of 1. The committee(s) transferred from loses, getting a score of –1. Committees not involved in the transfer process are scored as zero. Estimates of the probability of this data actually occurring are then calculated through maximum likelihood estimation.[5] The resulting coefficients essentially represent the average of the members' evaluations of a given committee. Table 2 presents the results of this analysis for the 1989–1992 committee period in the European Parliament.[6]

The standard errors are rather large and this does undermine our confidence in the accuracy of these rankings. To compute the Groseclose and Stewart rankings we need a reasonably large *n*. In the case of the US Congress, many Congresses are estimated together to ensure this result.

Table 2: Ranking of EP Committees: 1989–1992

Committee	Coeff.	Standard Error	Rank
Environment	∞	n.a.	1
Industry and Research	∞	n.a.	1
Economic and Monetary	.93	.47	3
Development	.65	.39	4
Legal	.57	.37	5
Foreign Affairs	.56	.31	6
Employment	.54	.36	7
Agriculture	.28	.34	8
Transport	.27	.75	9
Culture	.26	.47	10
External Economic Relations	-.03	.42	11
Regional	-.15	.34	12
Budgets	-.38	.45	13

N= 162
LL=-101.04
n.a= not applicable

The assumption made in this case is that committee values do not change over time, however this is clearly not valid in the context of the EP. In addition, there is the problem that transfers may represent promotions in terms of obtaining a committee position such as a chairmanship. Members may relinquish a position on a high demand committee for a chairmanship on a low demand committee and none of these rankings can take account of this type of movement. Normally, all things being equal, a member would not choose to move from, for example, the Environment Committee to the Transport Committee but if there is a chairmanship position involved such a move may be attractive to some members. Given the large standard errors, I am reluctant to use the actual Groseclose and Stewart Portfolio values as the dependent variable in the analysis, which follows.[7]

The major problem with any measure based on transfers is that we do not have a ranking system that is independent of the actual transfers. One must be concerned that these rankings will be biased if a large number of the transfers are not revealed preferences but rather are punishments or demotions imposed by the party leadership. To use these measure we have to make the assumption that all transfers are voluntary, as I argue this is not the case, these measures are undoubtedly biased. If we take this point to its logical conclusion, if all committee seats were punishments, the ranks would reveal not committee prestige but rather the opposite, the undesirability of committees. Fortunately, we do have theoretical reasons to expect certain committees to be more desirable than others and an alternative means of ranking the committees, independent of the actual transfer patterns, acts as an additional test of the ranking derived. Each committee has a chairman and upwards of three vice-chairs who are chosen by the committees at the inaugural meeting of the committee. In practice these positions are divided up amongst the political groups in advance of these inaugural meetings in proportion to party size by the d'Hondt method. For instance, in 1989 the Party of European Socialists (PES) with 180 members was

entitled to the chairs of the first, third, fifth seventh, ninth, twelfth, fifteenth and seventeenth committees. The EPP with 121 members was entitled to the second, fourth, eighth, eleventh and eighteenth committee chairs. The Liberal Democratic and Reformist Group (LDR) got their choice of the sixth and sixteenth committees, the European Democrats (ED), the Greens and the European United Left (GUE) got the tenth, thirteenth and fourteenth choices respectively. These choices are one means of independently verifying the results from the Groseclose and Stewart measure used above. In 1989, for the first time in the history of the directly elected Parliament, the Environment committee was taken as the first choice committee (Corbett et al.1995). This conforms with rational expectations, given that the Environment Committee benefited most from the institutional reforms introduced by the Single European Act. It also corroborates the rankings that derive from the Groseclose-Stewart method used above. The Greens chose the Regional Policy committee in thirteenth place and the GUE chose Culture in the fourteenth slot, confirming evidence from the Groseclose-Stewart ranking that these committees are not in high demand. We know that the EPP chose Foreign Affairs, Economic and Monetary and Legal affairs committees as its first three choices, thereby placing all three committees in the top eight. In addition, the PES placed Development in the twelfth places in committee rankings, suggesting that the rank of this committee by the Grosewart method may be artificially elevated.

The alternative methods of ranking committees for the period 1989–1992 correspond reasonably well (though not perfectly) and I use the information supplied by each to arrive at a basic division of committees into three types; exclusive, semi-exclusive and non-exclusive. Table 3 represents this trichotomisation of committees. The classification is admittedly not unproblematic; the exclusive category may be inflated for example. It includes, for instance, all five committees that received legislative powers under the Single European Act. But these committees were not equally affected.[8] And as such the dependent variable, demotion, may be understated. Certain demotions will be obvious, to move from the Environment Committee to the Culture Committee is a clear downward movement, but it is not clear if a move from the Environment Committee to the Legal Affairs Committee is a demotion or not. The trichotomisation thus errs on the side of caution.

Table 3: Classification of Committees

Committee Type	Committee
Exclusive	Environment Industry Economic and Monetary Legal Foreign Affairs Employment
Semi-Exclusive	External Economic Relations Agriculture Budgets
Non-Exclusive	Culture Development Regional Transport

3.1. Dependent variable

DEMOTION: I use demotion rather than promotion as the unit of analysis in this section because it directly captures the notion of party discipline and "individually targeted punishments" (Rasch 1999, 123). It is not clear that toeing the party line is sufficient cause for promotion, but if parties have some central authority, defectors will need to be punished. Also the possibility of demotion through the committee systems is an interesting variation for scholars of legislative organization. In the US Congress it is almost impossible to remove a member from a committee, given the so-called 'property right' norm of reappointment.

In this analysis, a member who transfers from an exclusive to semi-exclusive or non-exclusive committee is considered to be demoted and coded 1. Similarly, a transfer from the semi-exclusive committee to a non-exclusive committee is considered a demotion. Members who do not transfer, transfer among committees within the same category, or move from a low to high ranked committed are coded as zero. Using this classification system approximately 8 percent of members of both the PES and EPP are demoted at the halfway point through the Third Parliament (January 1992). If we also count those members who lost committee offices but remained on the same committee as demotions, there are just over 10 percent of members from both parties classified as being demoted.

In this section the analysis is confined to the years covered by the 3rd Parliament (1989–1994). I have additionally chosen to examine the transfer process for the second half of the 3rd Parliamentary session (January 1992) for a number of reasons. During the first half legislative session of each parliament upwards of a half of MEPs are freshmen.[9] Thus, it is very difficult at this point to predict the loyalty of any given MEP. It will not be clear which MEPs from this group of newcomers will serve best on which committees. However, at the half-way point through any given Parliament party leaders have had two and half years of observations for each individual member, they thus can make more informed decisions. In addition, party representation on committees is established during the first half of the Parliamentary session, so movements are not undertaken to accord with factors such as proportionality or geographic balance; these factors remain constant and thus need not perturb the analysis.

3.2. Independent variables

The key predictor variable is LOYALTY. Undoubtedly, party leaders take several factors into account when assigning seats to particular members: geographic balance, members' policy expertise, previous political experience to name but a few (Damgaard 1995). Here we are interested in measuring the impact of loyalty as exhibited in votes in plenary. Undoubtedly, loyalty is only partially captured through such a measure but it is undeniable that the most public demonstration of loyalty or dissent is through the process of voting on the floor of the house. While the majority of votes do not record individual MEP voting behaviour and roll call votes are almost certainly unrepresentative of votes in general (Carrubba et al. 2006) for the purposes of this paper this is not a problem. Roll call votes are certainly called to assess the level of party coherence on an issue. To vote against the party leadership on the floor is perhaps the clearest means of rebelling against the party. In this paper I examine if the party does indeed discipline these renegades in terms of committee assignments.

The measure employed here to capture individual members loyalty is a weighted logit technique first developed by Zeller and Lee (1965) and more recently employed by Coker and

Crain (1994). I have chosen to use this method rather than the linear method employed by Cox and McCubbins (1993), as it takes account of the fact that votes are generated by a binomial process; a member votes either yes or no on a proposal.[10] The index captures the frequency with which the *ith* member votes with the party leadership. Specifically, let *n* be the number of votes on which a member actually votes. Let *r* be the number of times the member votes with his party leadership. The loyalty index is then defined as follows:

$$\lambda_i = \log [(r_i + .5)/((n - r_i) + .5)]$$

As *n* is a finite quantity, when r=0 or r=n the tails of the loyalty index will underestimate the members loyalty score.[11] In these situations the individuals may have been even more loyal or less loyal if *n* was not a finite quantity. In these instances the loyalty index is adjusted by the procedure developed in Gart and Zweifel (1967) and Kalt and Zupan (1984):

$$\text{If } r=0\ \lambda_i = ((\log ((r_i + .5)/((n - r_i) + .5))) - .5)$$

$$\text{If } r=n\ \lambda_i = (\log ((r_i + .5)/((n - r_i) + .5))) + .5)$$

The resulting loyalty score is an unbounded log-odds ratio that increases monotonically with the rate of voting with party leadership. Loyalty is thus constructed to reflect the frequency, f_i, with which the *ith* party member casts a vote with the party leadership (see below).[12]

Sample of Votes: Which sample of floor votes should we examine? The very fact that a roll call vote is called is perhaps indication that the vote is important or that the political groups are unsure of how the vote will proceed. Nonetheless, we expect party leaders to be less inclined to punish members who vote against the party on non-legislative issues. In this analysis only roll call votes on legislative referrals under the co-operation procedure are used. It was only in these instances that the parliament was a true legislative body for the period under examination. Thus votes on motions of resolution or votes that fall under the consultation procedure are excluded from the analysis. A random sample of 160 such votes was collected from the Official Journal of the European Communities, Series C for the period July 1989–December 1991.[13]

The party leadership vote on each of these votes was identified for both of the major parties, the EPP and PES. In this analysis, the party leadership is defined as the president of the party and the vice-presidents from the largest national delegations. In the case of the PES the party leadership was taken to be the party president and the leaders of the British, German and Spanish delegations.[14] In the case of the EPP the leadership was defined as the party president and the leaders of the Italian and German delegations, which were substantially larger than any other national delegations.[15] Elite interviews suggest that the larger delegations within the Political Groups are favoured in all internal party matters. Votes on which the party leaders were divided are excluded from the analysis. Surprisingly such excluded votes were low in number. Of the 160 votes in the sample only three were excluded on the basis that the (PES) party leadership were divided on the matter. Only two such votes were excluded for the EPP. In addition, a handful of votes were excluded for the PES when all members of a particular national delegation voted against the party leadership position. In such instances, it is plausible that members are voting on the grounds of 'constituency' interests and are allowed some leeway by the party leadership.

A number of other independent variables are also included in the analysis, the first of which is seniority. It is not clear if seniority is a norm in the European Parliament. Bowler and Farrell (1995, 240) argue that seniority is irrelevant. However, their analysis does not take account of the very particular assignment rules in the EP. Elite interview evidence suggests that seniority may play some role in the assignment process though it cannot operate to the extent it does in the US Congress. There is such a high turnover amongst MEPs that a seniority system in the traditional sense cannot function. Freshmen MEPs do end up on high prestige committees and have even been known to get chairmanships. Nonetheless, we do have some evidence that seniority is not irrelevant. Table 4 displays the distribution of seats by freshmen versus non-freshmen for the Third through Fifth Parliaments and some noticeable differences emerge. High profile committees such as Foreign Affairs and Legal Affairs have a much higher number of returning MEPs than low prestige committees such as Culture or Regional Policy. Over the course of these three parliaments, the low prestige Regional Policy committee had twenty-one fewer returning MEPs than expected if there was no seniority norm in operation.

Long-standing members may be given some preference in committee assignments and they may have the right to remain on these committees having established some policy expertise in the area. In this analysis the concept of seniority is captured by two terms. YEARS simply refers to the number of years the member has served in the EP. TENURE on the other hand captures the number of terms that a given MEP has served on the committee on which he is currently a member. The two terms are necessary to capture the difference between deference to policy expertise in a given area and simple deference to long standing Members of Parliament.[16]

Table 4: Non-Freshmen Seat Advantage on standing committees 1989–1999

Committee	**N**	**Actual number of non-freshman MEPs**	**Expected Number of non-freshman MEPs**	**Non-freshman advantage**
Foreign Affairs	184	109	94.8	14.2
Agriculture	133	67	68.5	-1.5
Budgets	118	66	60.8	5.2
Economic and Monetary	165	78	85.0	-7.0
Research and Technology	76	40	39.2	0.8
External Economic Relations	63	32	32.5	-0.5
Legal Affairs	95	66	48.9	11.1
Employment	146	69	75.2	-6.2
Regional Policy	128	44	65.9	-21.9
Transport	78	35	40.2	-5.2
Environment	153	81	78.8	2.2
Culture	102	37	52.5	-15.5
Development	109	53	56.2	-3.2

Data compiled by author from the Melemsfortegnelse (List of Members) of the European Parliament.

H2: A member's chance of being demoted is inversely related to the length of term he has served in the EP.

H2a: A member's probability of demotion decreases with the length of term he has served on a particular committee.

An additional control variable included in the analysis is *ATTENDANCE,* the inclusion of this variable is important as the European Parliament has traditionally suffered from high degrees of absenteeism. It may be the case that simply participating in the legislative process may have an impact on maintaining one's committee position. MEPs who actively participate in the parliamentary process may be more likely to maintain their positions than those who are persistently absent. Simply turning up may count for rather a lot in the EP.

H3: Members who participate in the legislative process are less likely to be demoted than absentee MEPs.

Fully capturing the extent of an MEP's participation is somewhat difficult. Ideally one would have a measure that quantified participation in committee, on the floor and in the political group itself. However, in the absence (at present) of such a measure we will use participation in roll call voting in Strasbourg as a proxy measure. This measure probably overstates the degree of participation by MEPs. Turning up for the once monthly Strasbourg session affords an MEP more visibility than participating in committee or party activities in Brussels. If an MEP is going to participate in only one activity it is reasonable to assume that this would be tuning up for the plenary sessions. Using 290 votes randomly selected from the period of July 1989 to December 1991, I calculate the *ATTENDANCE* variable by dividing the number of times that each individual member actually votes by the total number of votes. The number of actual votes ranges from a low of 16 to a high of 270 for the PES.

The final control variable included in the analysis is *NATIONALITY*. There may be some advantage to belonging to the larger national delegations within a political group. These delegations tend to dominate the party leadership. Interviews with MEPs from small national delegation in both the EPP and PES suggest that this factor may not be trivial. One Irish member of the EPP suggested that

Nothing in the EP is a meritocracy, the thing to be is a member of a large delegation in a large party, allocation of reports, rapporteur positions etc. are completely done on this basis.[17]

NATIONALITY is a dummy variable coded 1 if the member belongs to the German, Spanish or English delegation for the PES and zero otherwise. Coded 1 for Germans and Italians from the EPP and zero otherwise.

H4: Members from large delegations are less likely to be demoted than members from small delegations.

ATTENDANCE and LOYALTY are also included as an interaction terms as it is hypothesised that the impact of participation is not equal for all levels of loyalty.

3.3. Analysis and results

The following model was estimated for both the largest parties, the PES and EPP:

$$\text{Prob } (Y=1) = \Lambda(\beta 0 + \beta 1 \text{years} + \beta 2 \text{Term} + \beta 3 \text{Nation} + \beta 4 \text{Loyalty} + \beta 5 \text{Prescence} + \beta 6 \text{Prescence} * \text{Loyalty})$$

Where Λ represents the logistic cumulative distribution function and Y= Demotion=1.

Only the two major parties are included in the analysis, as the number of seats that the smaller parties have on each committee is very small and gives rise to some serious sample size problems. The third largest group at this time, the Liberals, had a mere 45 members or roughly two members per committee. In addition, many of the smaller parties are very fluid in nature and are probably not promoting party discipline in the manner exhibited by the two dominant groups.

The hypotheses outlined above provide some expectations about the signs on the coefficients. Hypotheses 2 and 2a lead me to believe that the estimate of β_1 (YEARS) and β_2 (TENURE) will be negative. The longer a member has served in both the Parliament and on a given committee, the less likely he is to be demoted. Hypothesis 1 leads me to expect that the sign on LOYALTY should also be negative, less loyal members should be demoted. Similarly, the sign on ATTENDANCE should be negative.

Table 5: Logistic Regression Probability of Demotion 1992

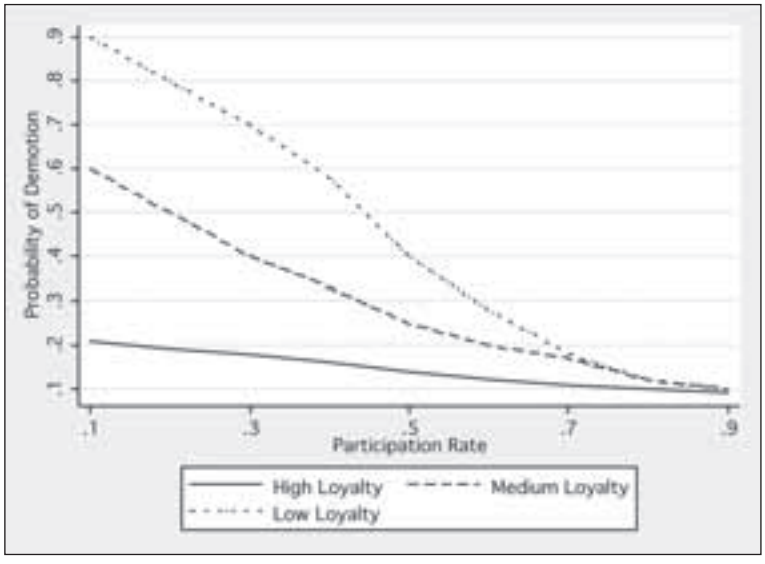
Variable	**PES Model 1**	**EPP Model 1**	**PES Model 2**	**EPP Model 2**
Loyalty	-2.07** (.941)	-1.50* (.85)	-1.83** (.95)	-2.14** (1.33)
Years	-.044 (.096)	.002 (.13)	-.03 (.10)	-.03 (.14)
Tenure	-.384 (.558)	-.263 (.46)	-.50 (1.22)	-.45 (.50)
Nationality	-.918 (.831)	-.637 (1.17)	-.97 (.85)	-.70 (1.18)
Attendance	-8.54** (4.20)	-2.35 ((5.5)	-8.07** (4.43)	-2.45 (6.72)
Loyalty*Attendance	2.399* (1.40)	.80 (1.78)	2.18 (1.48)	1.01 (2.14)
Constant	5.493** (2.50)	3.08 (2.70)	4.96** (2.60)	5.69 (3.99)
Number of Cases	174	112	138	87
Percent Correct	82	90	91	85
-2LL	111.36	99.01	71.93	66.04

Note: **significant at the p<.05 level, * significant at the p<.10 level
Standard errors in parentheses

The results are presented as Model 1 in Table 5. The results are largely consistent with expectations. Looking first at the results for the PES we see that all the signs are in the expected direction and that the coefficients on ATTENDANCE and LOYALTY are significant. Interestingly, the coefficients on NATIONALITY, YEARS and TENURE are not significant. For the EPP all the signs are in the expected direction also but only LOYALTY approaches standard significance levels.

Figure 1 captures the impact of ATTENDANCE and LOYALTY on demotion in the PES. The variables YEARS, TENURE and NATIONALITY were insignificant and set at their mean values. The probability reported is the probability of being demoted. As expected members who exhibit low levels of loyalty and who do not turn up regularly have a high probability of being demoted. However, a member who is very loyal to the party and participates in 80 percent of votes has merely a 10 percent chance of being demoted. As the graph reveals the impact of participation is not equal for all levels of loyalty. The results indicate that turning up counted for a great deal in the European Parliament in 1992. In the next section I examine if participation continues to be a sufficient condition for retaining one's committee position in later Parliaments. As parties institutionalise loyalty may become more highly valued.

Figure 1: PES Probability of Demotion by level of loyalty 1992



The committee assignment process is dynamic in nature and here we have only taken a cross-sectional look at the process. The above analysis is open to the criticism that by including all the MEPs in the analysis we may be including some renegade members who have already "bottomed out". That is, an MEP serving on the non-exclusive committees in a non-office holding position cannot be demoted any further. On the other hand, members on these committees may be also very loyal in their voting patterns in the hope of getting promoted to a more exclusive committee. Two countervailing processes may be at work concurrently. Model 2 in Table 5 reports the results from the analysis excluding those members of both parties who were in non-office positions on non-exclusive committees (that is members who could not be demoted further). The results are

consistent with the findings reported for the larger sample suggesting that these committees are not composed of a disproportionate number of party rebels.

The models presented here are extremely parsimonious but they correctly predict about 85–90% of cases. The success of the models is encouraging when one considers that no individual characteristics of MEPs or their policy preferences are contained within the models; we have assumed that each member has the same preference ranking over committees. The dependent variable is also not particularly refined; the category of exclusive committee is undoubtedly over inflated. Nonetheless, loyalty is clearly a significant and substantively important variable in the promotion game for both of these parties.

4. Robustness of Results

The above analysis is confined to one parliamentary period and in this section we briefly test the robustness of the results by applying the theoretical model to a more recent legislative session, the Fifth Parliament (1999–2004). In addition, in this section rather than looking at demotions I examine if MEPs who are particularly loyal to the political group are promoted through the committee system using an alternative measure of the key independent variable loyalty.

In the analysis that is presented in Table 6 I examine the likelihood that a member of the EPP who is loyal to his party is rewarded with a promotion though the committee system. As in the previous analysis, the rank ordering of committees for the time period (1999-2004) was derived by the Groseclose-Stewart maximum likelihood method.[18] The key theoretical concept, loyalty, is here measured as the absolute DISTANCE of a member from the median member of his party on first dimension NOMINATE scores. These scores are derived from an analysis of roll call votes and are a good indication of the degree to which an MEP votes with his or her political party.[19] The smaller this absolute distance the more loyal an MEP in this analysis, hence we expect a negative sign on this variable. That is, as the distance between an MEP and the median member of his party increases the probability of being promoted should decrease. TENURE, YEARS and ATTENDANCE are measured as before. NATIONALITY is again a simple dummy variable coded 1 if the member belongs to the German, Italian or English delegation and zero otherwise.

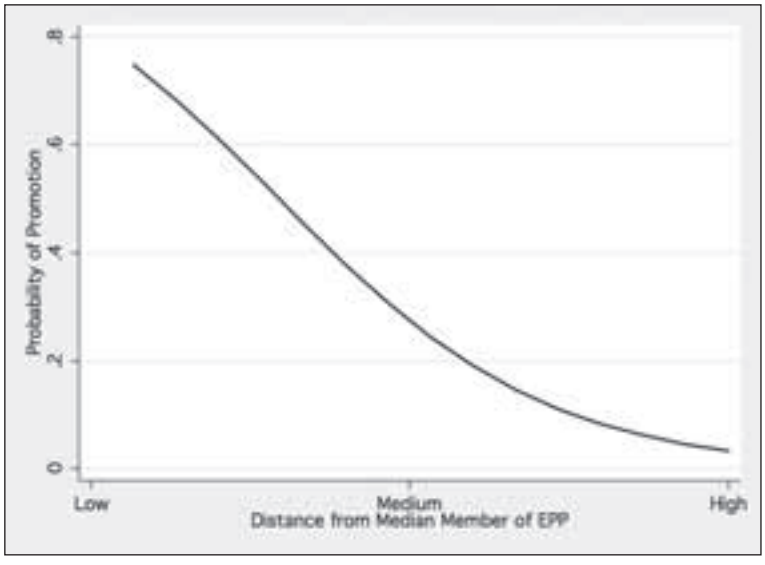
As the results in Table 6 clearly indicate, DISTANCE is both significant and in the expected direction. The further an MEP is from the party's median position, the less likely he is to be promoted. NATIONALITY is the only other significant variable and the sign suggests that MEPs from larger delegations are less likely to be promoted, perhaps due to greater competition within large delegations for such positions, though this hypothesis needs much further exploration. ATTENDANCE is no longer significant, turning up is not sufficient grounds for promotion in 2002. This is not surprising as the EP professionalized significantly in the ten years from 1992 onwards and levels of absenteeism significantly declined (Hix et al. 2007). For ease of interpretation Figure 2 graphs the impact of loyalty on the probability of promotion within the EPP for this period. As expected, members who exhibit high levels of loyalty (or have a low absolute distance from the party median in terms of their NOMINATE scores) have a much higher probability of being promoted. Overall these results suggest that the theoretical model is quite robust to different measures of the key concept of loyalty and to conceiving of the dependent variable both in terms of demotion and promotion. In addition, the results suggest that the model is applicable to very different legislative sessions of the European Parliament.

Table 6: Logistic Regression of Probability of Promotion in EPP 2002

Variable	**EPP Model**
Distance	-0.317*
	(.150)
Nationality	-0.847**
	(2.98)
Attendance	0.860
	(0.45)
Distance*Attendance	0.388*
	(2.20)
Tenure	-0.066
	(0.58)
Years	-0.006
	(0.08)
Constant	-2.377
	(1.38)
Number of Cases	204
Percent Correct	87
-2LL	145

Note: * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%

Figure 2: EPP Probability of promotion by level of loyalty in 2002



5. Concluding Remarks

The analysis in this paper demonstrates that even before the EP became a full actor in the legislative processes of the European Union, loyalty to the party leadership had its rewards. The evidence is strong that members who turned up and voted with the party were much less likely to be demoted than absentee and renegade MEPs. The results indicate that there is a significant and positive relationship between voting behaviour and transfer patterns among committees. These results are significant because they suggest, contrary to conventional wisdom, that the two largest political groups were in the process of consolidation even as the Parliament got its first significant powers. Parties with few means at their disposal to sanction rebel members have used the internal organisation of the Parliament, in particular the committee system, to attempt to enforce party discipline. There is also evidence to suggest that this process is not confined to one particular Parliament. The obvious extension of the analysis in this paper is to explore whether the findings hold in all Parliaments and in particular to see if the enlargement of the EP in 2004 had a significant impact on the ability of the political groups to sanction their members. In addition, future work should explore whether such mechanisms to sanction unruly members have been adopted by the smaller political groups.

NOTES

1 Interview, November 2000.
2 Interview, March 2000.
3 Interview, March 2000.
4 Data on committee assignments was collected from the committee listings in the *Medlemsfortegnelse* (List of Members) published each year.
5 The matrix of transfers with some manipulation can be estimated as a standard probit equation.
6 In this paper the analysis concentrates primarily on the years covered by the 3rd Parliament (1989–1994). This was the first parliamentary session in which the EP had significant legislative powers, in the form of the co-operation procedure. By choosing to examine this period rather than subsequent periods in which the Parliament gained more powers, I hope to demonstrate that the political groups consciously attempted to build strong organizations, even when the means at their disposal were limited.
7 There is a considerable overlap between these results and those from the Munger and Bullock and Sprague methods applied to the same data (McElroy 2003) and it is reassuring that the results by and large reflect the results obtained from these alternative measures. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss in detail the methodology by which these various alternative ranks are derived and the problems inherent in using committee to committee transfer patterns as the basis for rank ordering committees.
8 For instance, less than 10 percent of reports adopted in plenary and which fell under the co-operation procedure emanated from the Employment committee while a quarter came from the Economic committee.
9 In the 1989 Parliament, 49 percent of MEPs were freshmen.
10 Strictly speaking, votes are either yes, no or abstain in the European Parliament.
11 There are no actual instances in the data used in this analysis in which $r = 0$ but there are several instances in which $r = 100$, indicating that these MEPs never voted against the party leadership.
12 The mean loyalty score for the 112 members of the EPP is 3.56 and for the 174 members of the PES is 3.27.
13 This total represents almost 70 percent of such votes for this period.
14 These three delegations constitute approximately 60 percent of PES members at this time.
15 These two delegations constitute just over 45 percent of EPP membership but are each considerably larger than the next largest delegation.
16 These two variables are obviously correlated but due to the high transfer rates in the EP, not by any means perfectly correlated. The correlation for the PES is .654 and for the EPP it is .725.
17 Personal Interview, March 2000.
18 For reasons of space these tables are not presented here but are available from the author upon request.

19 The NOMINATE scores were calculated using a sample of 1500 votes for the time period July 1999 to December 2001. For more on the application of NOMINATE to roll call voting in the EP see Hix et al. (2007) or McElroy (2007).

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